

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (withdrawn). A method of forming a molded fibrous construct, comprising the steps of:

- a) forming a fibrous batt from staple length fibers comprised at least in part of thermoplastic polymer,
- b) mechanically integrating the fibrous batt into a fibrous pre-form mat,
- c) thermally treating the fibrous pre-form at a first elevated temperature for an initial duration,
- d) cooling the fibrous pre-form to less than the first elevated temperature, and
- e) thermoforming the thermally treated fibrous pre-form into a molded construct.

Claim 2 (withdrawn). A method of forming a molded fibrous construct as in claim 1, wherein said staple length fibers are selected from the group consisting of natural fibers, synthetic fibers, and the blends thereof.

Claim 3 (withdrawn). A method of forming a molded fibrous construct as in claim 2, wherein said staple length synthetic fibers are selected from a group consisting of polyacrylates, polyolefins, polyesters, and polyamides.

Claim 4 (withdrawn). A method of forming a molded fibrous construct as in claim 2, wherein said staple length fibers are selected from a group consisting of cotton, wood pulp, rayon, and the combinations thereof.

Claim 5 (withdrawn). A method of forming a molded fibrous construct as in claim 1, wherein said staple length thermoplastic fibers have a denier of at least 1.0.

Claim 6 (withdrawn). A method of forming a molded construct as in claim 1, wherein said fibrous batt has a binder fiber composition of at least 50% by weight.

Claim 7 (withdrawn). A method of forming a molded fibrous construct, comprising the steps of;

- a) forming a fibrous batt from staple length fibers comprised at least in part of thermoplastic polymer,
- b) mechanically integrating the fibrous batt into a fibrous pre-form mat,
- c) thermally treating the fibrous pre-form at a first elevated temperature for an initial duration,

d) compressing the heated fibrous pre-form to a level less than an uncompressed fibrous pre-form and greater than the part depth a molded fibrous construct is to have,

e) cooling the fibrous pre-form to less than the first elevated temperature,

f) thermoforming the thermally treated fibrous pre-form into a molded construct.

Claim 8 (withdrawn). A method of forming a molded fibrous construct, comprising the steps of;

a) forming a fibrous batt from staple length fibers comprised at least in part of thermoplastic polymer,

b) mechanically integrating the fibrous batt into a fibrous pre-form mat,

c) thermally treating the fibrous pre-form at a first elevated temperature for an initial duration,

d) compressing the heated fibrous pre-form to a level equal to the part depth a molded fibrous construct is to have,

e) cooling the fibrous pre-form to less than the first elevated temperature,

f) thermoforming the thermally treated fibrous pre-form into a molded construct.

Claim 9 (withdrawn). A method of forming a molded fibrous compound construct, comprising the steps of;

- a) forming a fibrous batt from staple length fibers comprised at least in part of thermoplastic polymer,
- b) mechanically integrating the fibrous batt into a fibrous pre-form mat,
- c) position at least one facing layer in face to face juxtaposition with the fibrous pre-form,
- d) thermally treating the layered fibrous pre-form at a first elevated temperature for an initial duration,
- e) cooling the layered fibrous pre-form to less than the first elevated temperature, and
- f) thermoforming the thermally treated layered fibrous pre-form into a molded compound construct.

Claim 10 (withdrawn). A method of forming a molded fibrous compound construct, comprising the steps of;

- a) forming a fibrous batt from staple length fibers comprised at least in part of thermoplastic polymer,

- b) mechanically integrating the fibrous batt into a fibrous pre-form mat,
- c) position at least one facing layer in face to face juxtaposition with the fibrous pre-form,
- d) thermally treating the layered fibrous pre-form at a first elevated temperature for an initial duration,
- e) compressing the heated layered fibrous pre-form to a level less than an uncompressed fibrous pre-form and greater than the part depth a molded fibrous construct is to have,
- f) cooling the layered fibrous pre-form to less than the first elevated temperature,
- g) thermoforming the thermally treated fibrous pre-form into a molded compound construct.

Claim 11 (withdrawn). A method of forming a molded fibrous compound construct, comprising the steps of;

- a) forming a fibrous batt from staple length fibers comprised at least in part of thermoplastic polymer,
- b) mechanically integrating the fibrous batt into a fibrous pre-form mat,

c) position at least one facing layer in face to face juxtaposition with the fibrous pre-form,

d) thermally treating the layered fibrous pre-form at a first elevated temperature for an initial duration,

e) compressing the heated layered fibrous pre-form to a level equal to the part depth a molded fibrous construct is to have,

f) cooling the layered fibrous pre-form to less than the first elevated temperature,

g) thermoforming the thermally treated layered fibrous pre-form into a molded compound construct.

Claim 12 (currently amended). A molded construct comprising,

a) a fibrous mat comprised at least in part of thermoplastic polymer,

b) said thermoplastic polymer comprised of at least one heat activated binder component,

c) said fibrous mat having been first heated for an incubation period to the activation temperature of the binder component, then thereafter cooled to a temperature less than the activation temperature of the binder component,

said fibrous mat having thereafter been subjected to an elevated temperature, and compressed to a thickness greater than or equal to a final molded construct

Application No. 10/021,929
Amendment dated March 28, 2005
Reply to Office Action of November 26, 2004

thickness, and thereafter cooled, and then thermoformed, said molded construct having a stiffness performance, per ASTM D-790, of at least 15% greater than a molded construct devoid of an incubated and cooled fibrous pre-form.

Claim 13 (canceled).

Claim 14 (canceled).

Claim 15 (previously presented). A molded construct in accordance with claim 12, wherein:

said fibrous mat comprises at least one facing layer, subjected to said incubation period, then cooled, then subjected to said elevated temperature, cooled, and thermoformed.

Claim 16 (canceled).

Claim 17 (canceled).

Claim 18 (canceled).

Claim 19 (previously presented). A molded construct as in claim 12, wherein said molded construct is an automotive interior panel.

Claim 20 (previously presented). A molded construct as in claim 12, wherein said molded construct is an appliance facing.

Claim 21 (previously presented). A molded construct as in claim 12, wherein said molded construct is an acoustic dampening shield.

Application No. 10/021,929
Amendment dated March 28, 2005
Reply to Office Action of November 26, 2004

Claim 22 (previously presented). A molded construct as in claim 12, wherein said molded construct is a domestic furnishing.